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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5702
INFO RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 1642
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 4746
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE PRIORITY 3097
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH PRIORITY 1683
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 1060

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 001425

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SUBJECT: KIM BEAZLEY TAKES A HIT AND SCORES A HIT ON
"AUSTRALIAN VALUES" PLEDGE PROPOSAL FOR VISA APPLICANTS

REF: A. CANBERRA 1172 B. CANBERRA 1244

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole. REASONS: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: On September 11 Labor Party (ALP) leader Kim Beazley proposed that all Australian visa forms contain a commitment to respect Australian laws and institutions. Prime Minister John Howard -- who also used the anniversary of the twin towers attack for his own anti-terrorism message -- praised the general idea but criticized the proposal for including tourists and other nonimmigrants. Members of the ALP's own caucus charged that Beazley's plan undermined the ALP's own values. However, as Labor's Shadow Minister for Immigration told us September 14, calls on public talk radio in New South Wales ran 3 to 1 in favor of the proposal. Despite the criticism within his own party, the proposal indicates that Mr. Beazley will not cede the important blue collar anti-immigration voters to the Coalition without a fight. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) On the fifth anniversary of September 11 ALP Leader Kim Beazley proposed that all visa forms contain a signed commitment by the applicant to respect Australian values and laws. He said that he firmly believed that commitment to Australian values of mutual respect, mateship, fairness, freedom and respect for the law were important strengths in the fight against extremism and terrorism.

¶3. (U) PM Howard, who said the same day that Muslim leaders should do more to condemn terrorism, responded that while the Government was planning to highlight commitment to Australian values for citizenship ceremonies and intending immigrants, it would be pointless to require tourists to do so. Not to be outdone by the Opposition, he added that he "very, very strongly" supported a full-bodied commitment to Australian values. At the end of the week, both politicians published dueling opinions on the importance of Australian values in the Sydney Morning Herald.

¶3. (C/NF) ALP Shadow Immigration Minister Tony Burke (Protect) told Poloffs this week that the point Mr. Beazley was trying to make was that a commitment to Australian values needed to be made by anyone coming to live in Australia on a visa, and not just citizens, as the Government proposed. Burke said they had never planned to include tourists in their proposal and that oversight had muddied their message. The good news, however, was that the calls to the talk radio programs in New South Wales were running 3 to 1 in favor of the proposal.

¶4. (C/NF) COMMENT: Mr. Beazley wrote in his Sydney Morning Herald opinion piece that as an Australian who embraced

multiculturalism and immigration, he could not sit back and watch John Howard manipulate values for political ends. What he really meant was that he could not allow John Howard to be the only one to use "the values issue" for political gain. As noted in reftels, next year's Federal elections will be in part a fight for "Howard's Battlers" and these conservative blue-collar voters have always reacted favorably to an "Australian values" immigration message.

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